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NIGHT CITY NIGHTMARES

URBAN LEGENDS IN THE TIME OF THE RED

OCTOBER 2026

VI.1

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Happy Halloween, **Cyberpunk** fans! This month, we are bringing you a collection of eight urban legends you can use to haunt Night City. Are these stories canon? They're certainly tales the residents of Night City repeat to frighten, titillate, and fascinate one another.

The versions you'll be reading, in fact, were presented as part of a regular and popular Garden Patch show hosted by influencer Tabitha "TSpooks" Evanovich. So, in that sense, they are absolutely canon.

Now, are the stories true? That's for you to determine. If you decide these strange events did happen in Night City – are still happening – you also get to work out the ultimate cause. Supernatural or scientific? Strange corporate experiment or eldritch occurrence?

We're presenting ideas. How you tune the spooky in your Night City is up to you.

Gamemasters, each story comes with rules/ideas to add these urban legends to your table. In order to preserve the surprise, we've slipped in that information at the end of the article and not after each individual story.

Players, we recommend not reading past the fiction of the stories themselves – just in case your GM decides to use them for a spooktacular session!

T SPOOKS TOP EIGHT

Happy Halloween, Night Citizens! I'm TSpooks and you're listening to my 'cast, *Night City Nightmares*. If you're new to the show, you picked the right time to press the play button, because this isn't just any episode!

Tonight, in honor of the holiday, I'm playing a compilation of eight of the best stories I've told on the show over the past year. Each is an absolute spine-tingler.

Listen with the lights off if you're brave enough, but if you leave them on, I won't judge.

Promise.

Thanks for connecting with Night City Nightmares, choombas. I encourage you to subscribe to my Patch and listen all the way through to the 'cast. That feeds the algorithm and helps the Patch thrive.

BADLAND WEREWOLVES

Theo Gallagher was tired. He'd been driving his MegaHauler for three days straight and injections of Surge weren't working anymore. Even though he was only a few hours away from Night City, he had to stop and catch a nap or he'd fall asleep and drive the truck, and the Continental Brands cargo he was carrying, right off the Skyline and into the pavement below once he passed the city border.

Theo pulled over, locked the truck down, and climbed into the sleeping compartment in the back of the cab. He was just drifting off to sleep when he heard it.

Howling.

Weird, he thought, since there hadn't been wolves in California for decades. Probably just a trick of the wind. He closed his eyes, calmed his heart, and willed the delta waves to come.

Then the howling. Again. Closer. Damn close. This time he couldn't blame it on the wind. Theo's adrenaline spiked, knocking him wide awake. He crawled out into the driver's seat, jacked into the truck, and mentally flipped the headlights on. That's when he saw them.

A dozen people. Tattered clothing. Wild, overgrown hair. They looked human in form, only there was nothing human in those eyes. Foam dripped from their mouths as they stared at the truck. Up at the windows. Up at Theo.

As one, the pack of strangers lunged forward, running up to the MegaHauler and leaping up onto it. Onto the cab. Scratching at the windshield. This close, Theo couldn't see any obvious cyberware. No scatchers. No rippers. No wolvers. Just long, ragged, human fingernails and yet, somehow, they were able to mark the glass. Weaken it.

Panicked, Theo slammed his rig into gear and jammed his foot down on the accelerator. The MegaHauler roared to life and jerked forward. As it picked up speed, Theo's assailants barked and howled. Some clung tight, continuing to slash and snarl at the windshield. Others fell off onto the dusty road, rolled, and began chasing him. Running on all fours.

Theo could swear they were keeping pace, even as he opened the truck up and ran it dangerously at full speed towards hopeful salvation in Night City.

Spiderweb cracks appeared in the windshield as the lights of the city rose in the distance. Theo's heart hammered and he grabbed his Big Gulp, ready to unload if one of the monsters broke through into the cab. The MegaHauler's swerved, too and fro, as he mentally waggled the path to shake them off. More of the monsters were thrown to the road. Only one remained.

It looked through the windshield and locked eyes with him. For a long moment, Theo couldn't breathe. Couldn't think. His pulse pounded like a drum solo during a chromatic rock concert. Words formed inside his brain.

"One of us."

Then the final monster person leaped from the hood of the truck and vanished behind him. Theo continued the drive, delivered his cargo, and checked his rig. For a moment, he thought – hoped – maybe it was a nightmare or a waking dream. It wasn't. There were fist-sized dents in the cab's armored chassis. Long, deep scratches in the bulletproof glass of the windshield. This wasn't a dream. The attack had been real.

Theo quit driving his rig after that, swearing he would never step foot beyond the city's borders ever again. Some nights, though, when the full moon's light pierces the oppressive smog, he hears the howls ... and panic wells in his chest as he feels the urge to howl back in return.

BAYWOOD FLATS DATA TERM

Eileen "iLeen" LaCoste was driving south of Night City on a borrowed Zonda R400 Trail bike. Past Playland by the Sea. Past the Jodes Camp. Off the Pacifica roads and away from the New Pacific Highway the going was rough. Bumpy. She loved it. Each almost wipeout was potential footage for her new video series, *Lost in the Outskirts*. Today, she was on her way to record the mysterious, abandoned, crumbling Pacifica Arcology Ruins. From the outside. Maybe someday Eileen would scratch up the ebs to hire a crew and explore inside, but today wasn't the day.

Today was the day she made a more interesting discovery. The city was behind her, lost in the morning smog. Ahead of her was nothing but flat, cracked land ruined by decades of drought ... and something else. Something strange.

A Data Term in the middle of nowhere.

Curious, Eileen slowed down and changed course, heading towards the anomaly. She kicked down the stand, dismounted from the R400, and approached, hand on her holstered gun. It could be a trap. A weird, strange, out of the way trap, but a trap. You never know.

The Data Term was covered in the red dust that blows regularly across the flats. Walking closer, Eileen realized it was old and similar to broken models she'd found in the Hot Zone. A keypad instead of a touchscreen. No holo projector on top. The built-in monitor didn't lay flat. It curved, slightly. Old technology.

Old technology that worked.

Fascinated, Eileen forgot about potential traps or bandits lurking over the horizon. She pulled a wipe from her carepak and cleaned gunk from the monitor and the keypad. Her mind turned over the possibilities. Maybe there was a settlement or an old rest stop here once upon a time. Something from before the 4th Corporate War. Only, why was the Data Term here when nothing else was? No ruin. No rubble. No broken old roads. No sign of civilization.

Eileen stuffed the filthy wipe into a pocket and stared down at the screen. At first it was blank, which wasn't surprising. Then there was a blip. A pulsing pixelated dot. She heard a whir. A whine. Then the ancient Data Term booted up.

Most of what she saw on the screen was garbled. Illegible. At first, at least. As Eileen stared at the Data Term, amazed it worked at all, the center jumble resolved itself into something legible. One word. One punctuation mark.

QUERY?

Obviously, she had to try it. To learn if the strange device could still pull up information from a Net that hadn't been functional since the 2020s. She thought a long moment about a possible query topic, then it hit her.

Eileen had just broken up with someone. It had been messy and she hadn't bounced back yet. The trip into the outskirts was supposed to take her mind off her ex. Obviously, it wasn't working, because she tapped the thick, plastic keys one by one, until she'd spelled out his name. Then she hit enter.

What happened next, she can't explain. The monitor on the Data Term flashed. Seemingly random patterns and bright bursts of light. She couldn't look away as information seeped into her eyeballs and seared into her mind. It went on for several minutes and then the screen went blank.

The experience unsettled Eileen. Her brain pounded, as if someone had opened up her skull and stuffed an extra percentage of grey matter inside her brain. She didn't know what to do, so she climbed onto the borrowed R400 and took off. Went home. Crawled into bed. Curled into a ball and willed herself to sleep. She'd have to film the Arcology Ruins another day.

A week later, Eileen was sitting in Air in the Glen, sucking down a lungful of Alpine Mountain Blend when her ex entered with a woman on his arm. He was laughing. She remembered that laugh. It was his "I feel lucky" laugh. The one that bubbled out of him when he was sure the night would end with sex.

Eileen couldn't help herself. She felt the emotions seep up from the worst part of her heart. An obsessive need to know. To know who the woman was. How long they'd been dating. If they were in love.

Eileen sat up with a start, dropping the oxygen mask. It dangled on its tube, an inch from the floor, as she realized she knew. She knew the woman's name. How long they'd been dating. That it was just sex and a good time. They weren't in love.

The more Eileen thought about her ex, the more she knew about him. Facts he'd never disclosed to her during their relationship. How he'd broken his knee in a skateboarding accident when he was seven. That he'd once been beaten by a shoal of high-as-fuck Piranhas because he'd insulted their favorite beat poet.

Eileen could know anything she wanted about her ex. All she had to do was ask the question in her head and the answer would appear. Just like typing a query into a Data Term.

Only, Eileen didn't just receive answers. She also started having visions. Her hand curling around the handle of a knife from her kitchen. Raising the knife. Slamming it down. Into a body. Into her ex's body. The more she accessed this strange new knowledge, the more visceral the vision became. She could hear the sickening squelch of piercing flesh. Smell the copper

tang of blood splattering. Feel the explosion of rage and adrenaline. Each time the vision grew stronger. Richer. It started feeling less like a fantasy and more like a reality. An inevitability.

The future.

It scared the hell out of Eileen. The Baywood Flats Data Term had given her a gift. A terrible, destructive gift. One she could never use because, if she did, she knew she would descend into madness. The vision would become reality. She would murder her ex.

That was a month ago. Today, Eileen is still out there. Still exploring the strange, forgotten corners of the world. Still making videos. You can find her content on the Garden and I recommend it. She does good work. The rate of uploads has increased in recent weeks. Eileen explores. She records. She edits. She uploads. Constantly.

Anything to keep from thinking about her ex. Because if she does, she might ask another question about him ... and the Data Term will answer.

CYBERPSYCHO IN WHITE

Iris Scott was a creature of habit. A mid-level analyst, she dutifully sat down at her data term at work each day, put in her hours, and returned home to relax in her employer-provided conapt in the Ziggurat Corporate Terrace. Her life followed that cycle. Sleep. Work. Home. Relax. Sleep.

Her one indulgence was the Neon Johnson. A jazz and blues lover, each Sunday evening Iris rode the elevator down to the ground floor, crossed the street, walked along Wilkson Way, hooked a left on Second, and passed through the neon red-lined entrance of Night City's premiere chromatic jazz club for a night of drinks and music.

Iris was a creature of habit, even with her entertainment but, one Sunday last year, her ironclad schedule was smashed by a ghost.

We call this ghost the Cyberpsycho in White. She's been known to appear in the streets around the Neon Johnson – an apparition in a blood and oil-soaked little white dress acting out a destructive battle against unseen enemies for a few flickering seconds before vanishing. Sightings of her are relatively rare. Some say only receptive souls can see this ghost act out her dance of death.

In life, the Cyberpsycho in White's name was Katarzyna "Mantis" Englar. A Solo packed from head to toe with cyberware who liked to party when she wasn't running the Edge. Years ago she was celebrating a job well done in a long since destroyed hole in the wall named the American Bar when she snapped. No one knows why. Could have been a fight. Could have been a malfunction in her chrome. Hell, maybe the bartender made her Blood Razer wrong. We'll never know. One moment Katarzyna was drinking, dancing, and laughing. The next she'd punched her wolvers through the bartender's face.

Katarzyna took the rampage out onto the street outside the American Bar, destroying people and property with equal enthusiasm, laughing maniacally while shouting one word over and over again.

"KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL!"

The rampage lasted twelve minutes before Max-Tac arrived and unloaded, pumping hundreds of high-velocity rounds into Katarzyna's body. They say she was still twitching on the ground when the squad's leader, a man named Ares, moved in and crushed her cyberskull with a SlamDance Hyper-Hammer.

The first recorded appearance of the Cyberpsycho in White happened a month later. The ghost appeared sporadically during the 4th Corporate War. During the rebuilding of the Upper Marina. And on a fateful Sunday evening, one year ago.

As she left the Neon Johnson, Iris Scott spotted the Cyberpsycho in White. She watched in awe and shock for several minutes as the ghost engaged in a spectral, psychotic dance of destruction. If she squinted, Iris was sure she could see not just the ghost of Katarzyna Englar, but her victims as well. If she inhaled deep, Iris was sure she could smell the blood. If she tilted her head, she was sure she could hear the screams.

The vision faded away. Iris shook her head, attributing the weirdness to the bourbon and tequila cocktail she'd drank and the occult themes in the lyrics of the evening's featured performer. She went home. Back to her employer-provided conapt and her bed. In the morning, back to her data term in Ziggurat Headquarters. Back to the grind. Back to her schedule.

The next Sunday, she deviated from that schedule. Iris left the Neon Johnson early and walked into the City Medical Center. A few hours later, she exited the

clinic with EMP threading embedded in her face. The next Sunday, she didn't go to the Neon Johnson at all. She went straight home to the City Medical Center. This time, she left with a new chip socket. The next Sunday, Iris tried to buy a set of wolvers. The medtech on duty refused. Later, when asked by a reporter, he simply said, "Something didn't feel right."

Iris walked out of City Medical and to a nearby bodega. She didn't go inside. Not at first. Instead, she swiped her Agent over the contact pad of a vendit and purchased two Faisal's OnlyChances. Cheap shotguns. One loaded with armor-piercing ammo and the other loaded with incendiary ammo. Then Iris walked inside and unloaded the first of her two OnlyChances into a customer buying some kibble. She dropped it, raised the second OnlyChance, and unleashed it into the clerk. The incendiary rounds set the clerk's clothing on fire. It spread to the rest of the store. It was still blazing when Iris bought every Faisal's Convenience stocked in the vendit and started firing at random passersby.

The bodega was a block away from the Hot Zone. Even in the Upper Marina, that slows cop response time. By the time NCPD arrived, Iris had worked her way through six of her seven Conveniences. The cops didn't hesitate. They opened fire. Iris unloaded her final pistol at the cops after she dropped to the ground, legs shredded and shattered by bulletfire. As she lay dying, one of the cops on scene heard her final words, each one punctuated by a burble of blood and bile.

"Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill."

HARRIET

Utah "Bouncer" Miller is a Netrunner who told a secret. One Max Hammerman and MAX-TAC would kill to keep.

Like many edgerunners, Bouncer was part of a crew. The Sixty Second Crew. Helen Troy was their Fixer. Arrow was their driver. And Titan Steel provided the muscle. Too much muscle. After the last gig went off without a hitch, Titan used the payout to upgrade to an internal omega linear frame. Plenty of power, but he was already teetering on the edge. The frame pushed him off, over, and into the abyss in the middle of a stakeout.

The Sixty Second Crew was tight. Friends, even. When Titan started shouting at invisible monsters, they tried to talk him down. Arrow was the first to die, shot right between the eyes by Titan's Hellbringer. Helen went next, impaled on Titan's pop-up mono-wakizashi. Then Titan began hunting Bouncer.

Bouncer ran. He hid. He prayed for a miracle ... and he got one, in the form of MAX-TAC. The Sixty Second Crew had been casing an Exec's house in Acacia Way, Downtown. Someone saw the violence through the window and went straight for the best. They didn't call the local security provider – Whitewater – or even NCPD. They called MAX-TAC. Five minutes later, hell rained down from the sky.

Ever know someone addicted to the Data Pool? The sort that checks the Garden for new content, new posts, and new replies at least once a minute? Some Netrunners are like that, only they substitute scanning for NET Architecture access points for Data Pool scrolling.

So, Bouncer watched from his hidey hole as his buddy Titan Steel threw down with Night City's premier cyberpsycho extermination squad and, without thinking, he fiddled with his cyberdeck, scanning for access points. It was instinct. A habit. Something he didn't even think about anymore. As natural as looking, listening, and smelling. Just another one of his senses.

He didn't expect to find anything new. MAX-TAC was top of the line. The cyberware would be hardened and access points would be locked down. Imagine his surprise, then, when a feed popped up in Bouncer's Virtuality display.

MAX-TAC's AV – hovering low so the gunner could open fire on Titan with a Victoria chaingun – pinged with an access point named HARRIET. Bouncer couldn't help it. The situation was already absurd, so why not give into the urge and try to jack into a MAX-TAC NET Architecture?

I'll save the geek speak for this story and just say Bouncer got his nickname from being good at "bouncing" from floor to floor while netrunning. His speciality was diving deep, diving fast, and paying attention to his virtual surroundings while leaping from floor to floor, dodging ICE and enemy Netrunners. Which is why he got deep enough, fast enough, to realize MAX-TAC's NET Architecture was strangely empty. No Black ICE.

No Demons. Not even a system operator. Just a dozen control nodes and something Bouncer had never encountered before.

See, in his time as an edgerunner, Bouncer had encountered Artificial Intelligences, but never anything like this. Bouncer didn't encounter an avatar. An icon. A singular representation. Instead, he could feel it permeated into every floor, every bit, every byte.

There wasn't an AI in the NET Architecture. The NET Architecture was the AI. Connected, Bouncer realized, to every MAX-TAC grunt on site. Not just a passive connection either. It was coordinating them. Like a pack of wolves. Or maybe more like a colony of warrior ants.

By this point, Bouncer was barely aware of the fight happening just a few meters away. Titan Steel had killed two MAX-TAC agents. A third was leaping out of the way as the AV gunner opened fire. Bouncer, meanwhile, was probing one of the control nodes. Trying to understand what he was virtually seeing.

Then the AI interacted with him. Not in words. Not like the AI we watch on the Data Pool or experience via Braindance dramas. No, Bouncer just knew. The same way he knew his heart was beating too fast and his skin was soaked in cold sweat. He could feel the AI scan him. Feel the AI trace the link back to his hiding place. Feel an unused control node activate. Feel it try to connect. Embed.

Take over.

Bouncer disconnected so hard, so fast, and so violently blood dripped from both nostrils. He turned and ran. Behind him, Titan Steel, his crew member ... his friend ... exploded. MAX-TAC had brought out the grenades.

Bouncer hasn't netrun, since. He was on his way out of Night City when he called Night City Midnight Radio on 88.9 NoPR and told this story to the host, Chuck Powders. His warning was clear. If you see MAX-TAC run. Don't engage. Don't even think of engaging. Run. Because MAX-TAC soldiers aren't people. Not anymore. Just a collection of bioorganic drones, controlled by an AI beyond human comprehension. Incapable of mercy. Of empathy. Of humanity.

And if MAX-TAC doesn't kill you, they might recruit you – and you could be the next drone hooked up to one of HARRIET's control nodes.

HOT ZONE LURKER

No one would accuse members of the Undertow to be deep thinkers. A small Downtown gang, the Undertow talk big about protecting their district from greedy developers and fat cats, but in reality they're just a group of hot-headed doombas who regularly engage in the sort of stupid antics popular with hot-headed doombas everywhere.

Take for example Undertow ganger Tommy Lamas. One hot, August evening he was hanging out with other members of the gang. They were drinking smash and daring each other to do dangerous and stupid things. A typical night for the Undertow. When it came for Tommy to be on the receiving end, his friends skipped past typical dares like a game of Russian roulette or chicken and challenged him to walk for ten minutes in the Hot Zone then walk back, recording video on his Agent the entire time.

Tommy was drunk enough to agree without a second thought. Or a first one. He and his friends drove to the edge of the Hot Zone. Tommy stepped out of the car, held his Agent up in his left hand, and instructed it to record. Then he began walking.

At first it didn't seem so bad. The Hot Zone, on the edges, feels like any other set of ruined buildings. Almost a regular combat zone. After a few minutes, though, the rest of the city falls away. The busy sounds of the urban landscape quiet. The ruins of the old Corporate Center rise up around you like jagged teeth jutting out of a corpse's mouth.

We have Tommy's video. I'll link to it in the description below. We watch from his point of view as he walks through the wreckage. He's drunk, so his path sways back and forth. Once, he's forced to scramble down an embankment into what was once a sewer and is now just a broken urban ravine. After that, he follows the path of least resistance, walking along the bottom ravine until a rusty ladder provides a convenient exit.

The footage shifts violently and we hear a slap of flesh on flesh. Tommy growls about something biting him. He's still complaining about it when he spots something up ahead. A glow. Like an early victim in a horror flick, Tommy moves closer. The Agent starts trembling as his nerves act up. By the time he circles around the

husk of an ancient NCTC Urban Transporter the Agent is shaking so hard it looks like it's recording footage of the 2033 earthquake.

What happened next depends on what you want to believe. Tommy's video is unsteady. Wild. Out of focus. There's a blob of bright yellow. A flash of green. Then he turns and runs like the Devil is chasing him. You can almost smell him losing control of his bladder.

Watching the video, I can't say for certain what Tommy witnessed during his walk in the Hot Zone. The footage is too blurry. Breaking it down frame by frame doesn't help. Yellow blob. Green flash.

So I can't say what Tommy witnessed, but Tommy himself? He insists he encountered the Hot Zone Lurker.

There are hundreds of stories about the Hot Zone Lurker and they vary from witness to witness. Scavvers tell tall tales about Lurkers while huddled around fires. Garden Patches dedicated to the Lurker pass along those tales to the public at large and the legend grows with every telling. Distilling out the commonalities to form a base level picture isn't easy, but I'll try.

Most stories about the Hot Zone Lurker suggest that it looks like an emaciated human-like being wearing a yellow hazmat suit with no helmet and no gloves. Its eyes, all three of them, are clearly cybernetic, but its hands vary. They're usually described as skeletal and bone white, but some stories suggest stripped, broken cybernetics instead. The one point every story agrees on, though, is the power in those hands.

If the Hot Zone Lurker touches you, the hand grows green. Then you glow green. Then you melt into a pile of radioactive goo. Luckily for most of us, the Lurker never leaves the Hot Zone. Unluckily for anyone who comes across it, the Lurker can't be harmed. Can't be killed. The Lurker finds its prey, touches them, melts them, and shambles off into the wreckage looking for a new victim.

Even members of Maelstrom steer clear of the Hot Zone Lurker. When he's drunk, the gang's leader – Warlock – tells a story about encountering the Lurker while hunting in the Hot Zone. Fists. Wolveres. Flamethrower. Grenades. Warlock hit the Lurker with everything he had. The urban legend shrugged it all off like it was nothing. Then it turned and vanished into the early morning haze.

A cynical soul might think Warlock's story is all about talking up his rep. He fought the Hot Zone Lurker and survived. That makes him tougher than most. Those who have heard him tell the story, though, note the genuine fear in his voice.

And if the Hot Zone Lurker scares the leader of Maelstrom, maybe we should all take it seriously.

MORRO BAY WITCH

There has only been one witch trial in California history. It didn't happen at the same time as the famous mass hysteria in Salem, Massachusetts. Didn't happen during the explosion of population during the California gold rush. No, this trial happened in 1975. October.

The cult called itself the Children of Exodus. I'll spare you the theological contortions the cult leader, a man who called himself Father Abraham, made to justify his actions and beliefs. I'll just say they believed in an angry, wrathful, Old Testament kind of God viewed through the whims, appetites, and lusts of whatever Father Abraham was into that particular month.

The witch's name was Anne. Lucky to her friends. Her birthday was October 31st. That was strike one. Her parents had recently joined the cult and brought Anne with them to Father Abraham's compound outside of Morro Bay. She was a strong minded young feminist who believed in gender equality. That was strike two.

You can probably already predict strike three. Father Abraham already had two wives, and was looking at Anne as a possible third. When Anne rejected both the idea and him he accused her of witchcraft. There was a trial. Father Abraham was the judge.

He declared Anne guilty. Cult members handcuffed her into a leaky old rowboat and towed her out to sea. They left her to drift.

They left her to drown.

Seventy-three years later, Thelas Marine Captain Ivan Varvakis was on the *John Wilson*, a Triaina Patrol Boat, binoculars up, watching the smuggling vessel they were chasing. It was slow going, but the *John Wilson* was closing in. In less than fifteen minutes, they'd be within firing distance. Then it would be over. Nothing on the target could match their firepower.

The *John Wilson* hit a hard wave and the sudden motion forced the aim of Ivan's binoculars down. That's when he spotted her. A young woman handcuffed to a leaking rowboat.

Ivan had to make a decision. If they stopped to rescue the young woman, they would probably lose the smugglers. Months of investigation, case building, and patience would go down the drain. If they pressed on with the chase, he doubted that rowboat would stay above the waves long enough for another boat to reach its coordinates.

Swearing in Greek, Ivan ordered his pilot to slow and approach the rowboat. Ordered his people to rescue the young woman. As the smugglers powered ahead, the Thelas Marines cut the handcuffs and hauled the young woman on board the *John Wilson*.

She said her name was Anne, but her friends called her Lucky. That she had been pushed to sea by a madman who called her a witch. She thanked Ivan for saving her. Complimented his uniform. Even called his "pirate vibe" "groovy." Then she wished him "all the luck in the world."

Ivan looked away, scanning the distance with his binoculars. He expected to find nothing. Instead, he spotted the smugglers' boat. Not only was it still in sight, it wasn't moving. Stuck, it seems, on a submerged bit of wreckage.

He turned to apologize to Anne. To tell her it would take longer to get her back to land than they'd hoped. Only she wasn't there. She wasn't anywhere. Anne, the young woman they had rescued from a leaky rowboat adrift upon the waves, was gone. As if she had never existed at all.

Ivan Varvakis and the crew of the *John Wilson* had just met the Morro Bay Witch.

RED RIDER

Danny Blaine was chill. Relaxing in the driver's seat of his well-loved, heavily modified 2019 BMW Volksrad. Just him, a bag of rainbow chili kibble, and the sunset. He'd just returned from a trip scouting out the route between Night City and Fresno for an upcoming job. A short distance to travel, but it was important the pack have the most up-to-date information. Back now, he was taking a break and enjoying the solitude for another few minutes before returning to camp.

Maybe that's why he didn't notice the other car until it pulled right up next to him. Another 2019 BMW Volksrad, nearly identical to his own but painted in shades of red – like a palette swap in a video game. Behind the other car's wheel was a figure in crimson leathers wearing an open face helmet, only there was no face. Just floating orbs of fire for eyes. The figure raised a gloved hand and pointed to a tall, twisted Joshua tree in the distance, then revved their engine.

Danny instantly knew he was being challenged to a race. A race with the Devil.

Nomads tell stories of the Red Rider around campfires. The Devil finds you, alone and in your vehicle, somewhere in the wide distance between cities. Pulls up in red riding leathers and a car or motorcycle identical to your own. Challenges you to a race ... and when you lose the race, you lose your soul.

The Red Rider is a cautionary tale nomads tell their kids to warn against the dangers of pride and ego. Danny knew that. He'd grown up listening to the stories, but when he heard the Rider's engine roar in challenge he couldn't help it. He pressed down on the accelerator and answered with a roar of his own.

The race was brutal. More challenging and more intense than outrunning the cops or the Raffin Shiv. The Red Devil was a mirror. A perfect match. Every maneuver, every trick Danny pulled, the Red Rider knew the counter. When Danny popped spikes and pulled alongside his opponent to rip open that car, the Rider answered with fiery spikes of their own. When he pulled ahead to take a jump and avoid bottoming out in a dead streambed, the Rider swerved around, beat him to it, and took the jump first.

The race was neck and neck the entire way. Danny pulled ahead of the Red Rider. The Rider pulled ahead of him. They battled, back and forth. Somewhere around the dry streambed, he heard something dragging, then break off – a flash of metal in his rearview mirror. Warning lights flashed on the dashboard. He'd had to go back and retrieve whatever it was and weld it back on later.

The tall, twisted Joshua tree loomed closer. The finish line beckoned. Danny brought his thumb down, ready to hit the NOS at exactly the right moment. Only he didn't get the chance. Flames spat out from the Rider's tailpipe. The enemy car rushed ahead and passed the tree in an explosion of fire and noise.

Danny skidded to a stop and shielded his eyes from the overpowering light. It took time for the popping flashers to fade from his overloaded optics. For his ears to stop ringing. When they did, he realized he was alone. No other vehicle. No Red Rider. If it wasn't for the damage to his car and the pounding of his heart, Danny couldn't be sure it wasn't all a dream. That he'd raced the Red Rider at all.

Raced and lost.

Danny snorted. He could live with losing. At least he'd gotten a hell of a story out of it. They'd be buying him drinks at María's for weeks thanks to this. He shook his head to clear the last of the overload from his senses and reached for the gear shift. Then he hesitated.

Was it brake, clutch, shift, clutch, accelerate? Or clutch, brake, shift, clutch, accelerate?

Danny felt his stomach churn. He knew this. He'd known it since he was a kid, learning to drive in a rusting Molly 1K. He knew this!

Only he didn't. As his shaking hands gripped the wheel, Danny Blaine felt it deep in his gut. He'd forgotten how to drive.

He'd lost the race to the Red Rider and, just like the campfire stories warned, he'd lost his soul.

His nomad's soul.

SHIMMERING SMOG

It was a quiet Saturday night and Lynn Moonbeam had just finished up work for the day. She was a sales rep for SkidRow Limited and today had been particularly trying, so she intended to stop by Vargtimmen for a mug of mead before going home to crash for the night. She never made it. Not that night, at least.

On Morton Street, a sudden smog rose up. Shimmering yellow and green. Thick. Lynn thought nothing of it. After all, this was Night City. Smog was a daily occurrence. She paused, slipped on a filter mask, and kept walking, intending to turn right on Harbor Road South. Instead, she turned right on a different street. In a different part of Night City.

When the smog lifted, Lynn was standing on Dream Street on the south side of North Heywood. Confused, Lynn checked her skinwatch. It was less than ten minutes

since she clocked out of work. Not enough time to travel from Watson to North Heywood, even if she had somehow blacked out and forgotten the trip. Somehow, she had been transported through space to another part of the city in the blink of an eye.

...

It was early Thursday morning when Sudhir Banerjee encountered the shimmering yellow fog. He was leaving Studio Block B and on his way to breakfast and the smog wasn't unexpected. The weather forecast on N54 that morning had predicted it would rise early and last into the early afternoon. So, he thought nothing of it.

Not until Sudhir spotted sparkles through the lens of the mask. Shimmering motes of yellow and green. The smog grew so thick he couldn't see the broken sidewalk in front of him, so he stopped for a moment. Stopped walking. Waited for the worst of it to pass. After all, if he tripped and broke something, he probably couldn't afford to repair or replace it.

It only took a minute for the smog to die down. Not diminish. Vanish, as if boiled off by a midday sun still hours away. Sudhir continued on his morning constitutional, walking to the local bodega. They had a small grill in the back. He was surprised to discover the grill serving the lunch menu. After all, only a few minutes ago, he'd been leaving the apartment as the sun rose. Checking his Agent, he saw it was now well past noon. In the span of a few minutes, somehow several hours had passed.

...

Mal "Flasher" Devincher was where he always was on a Friday afternoon: the corner of Government and Gibson in the Old Combat Zone, selling whatever goods he'd managed to scrounge up earlier in the week. He wasn't expecting the smog. So far, the day had been clear. Sunny. Boiling hot, even.

The smog rolled in just the same, like a wave of polluted water flowing across the ocean. One moment it was clear. The next, Mal was surrounded by a yellow and green sparkling fog. He didn't own a breathing mask anymore – he'd sold it to one of the kids from GenRed a few weeks ago – so he pulled up his shirt to cover his nose and mouth. The smell was intense. Enough to make Mal dizzy. So dizzy he passed out.

The next thing Mal knew, someone was shaking him awake. Mal knew the guy. His name was Malcolm but everyone called him Cowboy on account of his fondness for a certain type of boot. Cowboy was on patrol as a member of ERI, trying to keep chaos in the Old Combat Zone to manageable levels. His smile was kind and his eyes concerned as he asked if Mal was alright.

Mal promised he was and, with Cowboy's help, stood up. Just the smog, Mal said. That confused Cowboy, because there had been no smog. The afternoon had been clear and the sun was beating down mercilessly. That wasn't the only thing to baffle Cowboy, either.

"What are you doing on Gibson, Flasher?" Cowboy asked, "Usually you set up shop over on the corner of Government and Effinger."

Mal wondered if maybe the sun overhead had fried Cowboy's grey matter, because he'd been selling goods on the corner of Government and Gibson for as long as he'd been operating. He said so and Cowboy shook his head and said that wasn't so. The rest of Cowboy's patrol agreed. Mal "Flasher" Devincher was a mainstay of the Old Combat Zone – a reliable source for random goods at a cheap price and he'd always stood on the corner of Government and Effinger.

Mal didn't argue, but he did check around after that. Talked to other people. Customers he'd known for years. Every single one of them insisted they'd bought merchandise from him on the corner of Government and Effinger. No matter the weather or the season, they'd always found him there. No where else. Certainly not a block or so east on the corner of Government and Gibson.

Mal checked further. Nothing else about his life or the world was different. Just that one small detail. It was odd. Peculiar. Even unsettling, but there was nothing Mal could do about it. If he harped on it, people would think he was insane and that would be bad for business.

Today, if you visit the Old Combat Zone, you'll find Mal "Flasher" Devincher standing on the corner of Government and Effinger, selling whatever goods he's managed to scrounge up. He stands there because that's where customers know to find him, but if you catch him while he's drunk or high he'll tell you. He shouldn't be at the corner of Government and Effinger. He should be standing one block east, on Government and Gibson. That's where he was, before the smog rolled in.

NIGHTMARE RULES

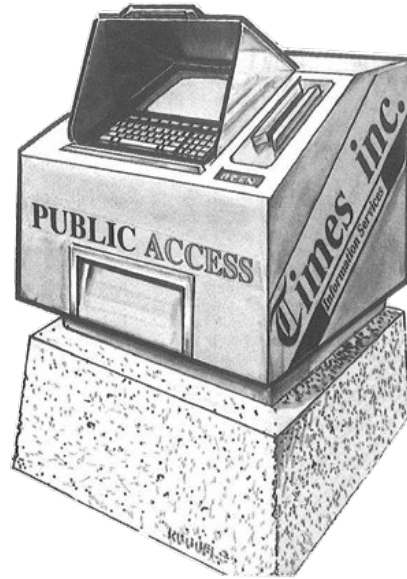
The following rules and ideas are completely and one-hundred percent optional. Only bring them into play if you want to add a touch of the strange, supernatural, or weird to your campaign.

BADLAND WEREWOLVES

The Badland Werewolves are a pack of Outskirts wanderers suffering from ... well, the GM decides. Maybe the cause is supernatural, maybe psychological, maybe braindance addiction. For whatever reason, members of the pack believe that, under the light of the moon, they transform into wolves. While in their wolf state, the Werewolves run rampant and attempt to rip apart and devour anyone they come across. At the GM's discretion, the condition can be contagious. If so, they decide the mechanism for transmission and any methods for curing a victim.

BAYWOOD FLATS DATA TERM

If someone finds the Baywood Flats Data Term they can enter the name of a person, place, or thing into the query field. If the name is of long term importance to the person, the Data Term will accept the query and then upload information into their brain. They



gain a unique Skill: Lore (The Subject of the Query) with a base of 18. All they have to do is think of a question about the subject of the query and make a Check. If they succeed, they get the answer ... and lose 1d6 Humanity. It cannot be regained except through therapy for Extreme Humanity Loss.

If they enter cyberpsychosis due to this Humanity Loss, the subject of the query becomes the centerpoint of a dangerous fascination. The GM or Player should be sure to play it out accordingly.

NAME **BADLANDS WEREWOLF (WOLF STATE)**

SERIOUSLY WOUNDED

—

HP

40

LEVEL **HARDENED LIEUTENANT**

DEATH SAVE

5

STATS

INT 3 REF 7 DEX 8 TECH 2 COOL 2 WILL 4 MOVE 8 BODY 5 EMP 2

ATTACKS

FANGS (C#12)

ROF1

2D6

CLAWS (C#12)

ROF2

4D6

ARMOR

HEAD

—

—

BODY

—

—

SKILL BASES

Athletics 13 • Brawling 14 • Concentration 12 • Endurance 12 • **Evasion 13** • Human Perception 8 • Melee Weapon 12
Perception 10 • Resist Torture/Drugs 14 • Stealth 10 • Tactics 10 • Tracking 16 • Wilderness Survival 12

ABILITIES

Combat Awareness: A Badlands Werewolf in Wolf State is not technically a Solo, but it can use the Combat Awareness Role Ability (**SEE CP:R PAGE 146**) at Rank 3 so long as it is within 20 m/yds or another Badlands Werewolf.

Natural Weapons: A Badlands Werewolf's weapon cannot be disarmed.

Primal Protection: A Badlands Werewolf is immune to the effects of non-mortal Wound States.

CYBERPSYCHO IN WHITE

Someone who witnesses the Cyberpsycho in White risks possession by the ghost’s cyberpsychosis. They must first make a DV13 Concentration Check. Failure means the victim is now addicted to implanting cyberware. Once per week, the Edgerunner must succeed at a Resist Torture/Drugs Check (see chart below) or succumb to the urge to visit a ripperdoc and have a new piece of chrome installed. The first piece can be fashionware but, after that, it must cause Humanity Loss.

CYBERPSYCHO IN WHITE DVs

Humanity	DV
70-80	9
60-69	13
50-59	15
40-49	17
30-39	21
10-29	24
0-9	29

Successfully resisting the urge three times breaks the addiction and frees the Edgerunner from the Cyberpsycho in White’s possession. At the GM’s discretion a good exorcism or similar ritual might also do the job.

HARRIET

If HARRIET truly exists, the AI performs two functions. First, it upkeepes its drones, keeping them from succumbing to cyberpsychosis while operating at low, perhaps even negative, Humanity. Second, it connects and coordinates the drones, giving them the following ability.

Combat Awareness Upgrade: MAX-TAC operatives coordinated by HARRIET gain a +1 to their Combat Awareness (even if they have a Combat Awareness of 0) for each MAX-TAC drone within 20 m/yds of them.

HOT ZONE LURKER

The Hot Zone Lurker is an unusual and strange being that does not follow the laws of nature, Night City, or **Cyberpunk RED**.

NAME

HOT ZONE LURKER

LEVEL

HARDENED BOSS

SERIOUSLY WOUNDED

—

DEATH SAVE

10

HP

70

STATS

INT

3

REF

8

DEX

8

TECH

6

COOL

5

WILL

8

MOVE

6

BODY

15

EMP

—

ATTACKS

BRAWLING ATTACK (C#18)

ROF2

5D6

ARMOR

HEAD

LURKER FLESH

SP12

BODY

LURKER FLESH

SP12

SKILL BASES

Athletics 16 • Brawling 18 • Concentration 10 • Endurance 18 • Evasion 16 • Local Expert (Hot Zone) 13 • Perception 11
Stealth 18 • Tracking 13 • Wilderness Survival 16

ABILITIES

Lurker Protection:

The Hot Zone Lurker is immune to the effects of poisons/toxins, damage from Choking, non-mortal Wound States, and Critical Injuries. When the Lurker’s HP reaches 0, it does not enter the Mortally Wounded State but instead is driven off and escapes into the Hot Zone. It cannot be killed or destroyed through damage alone.

Melting Hand:

The Lurker’s grapple takes the form of attaching its hand to its target’s face. This acts like a Grab in all ways and the target is considered Grappled. On subsequent Turns, instead of a Choke Action, the Lurker can instead choose to do 8d6 damage directly to the target’s HP. Even though the Lurker’s hand is attached to the the target’s head, the damage is not doubled.

MORRO BAY WITCH

Anyone who encounters the Morro Bay Witch on the waters near Night City should not do so during a calm moment. It should be during a moment when stopping to rescue a young woman handcuffed to a leaking rowboat means they'll risk losing either their objective or their lives. If they stop to rescue the Witch, she will wish them "all the luck in the world" before vanishing as soon as they take their eyes off of her. The next time a member of the boat's crew spends Luck on a Check, they automatically succeed. The results should be spectacular and helpful to achieving their current objective.

If they don't rescue the Witch, she shouts after them, cursing them. The rest of the Session – or the next one if the Witch is not rescued at the end of a Session – those involved suffer a -2 penalty to all Checks unless they spend at least one point of Luck to boost the Check. At the GM's discretion, this curse can continue until the unlucky choombas find some way to mollify the Witch instead.

RED RIDER

The Red Rider will only race a solitary driver of skill. No one else can be in the car/on the bike and the driver must have a Drive Land Vehicle Skill base 14 or higher. The Rider mirrors their opponent, using their statblock (including LUCK) and the statblock of their vehicle. After all, the Devil likes a fair fight.

If the Red Rider wins, their opponent loses the ability to drive. Their Drive Land Vehicle Skill Rank remains the same, but any Checks made using it automatically fail. At the GM's discretion, they can recover their ability to drive by undergoing a quest to redeem themselves.

If the Red Rider loses, the Rider vanishes but leaves behind the Red Ride, a unique superbike.

The Red Ride is a Superbike with an Armored Chassis, Enhanced Interface Plug Integration, NOS x2, Onboard Flamethrower, Onboard Melee Weapon, Reinforced Hull/Tires & Security Upgrade. The Red Ride is willful and controlled using the Riding Skill instead of Drive Land Vehicle. A Nomad can add their Moto Rank to Riding Skill Checks to control Red Ride as long as that Nomad is their owner. Red Ride is repaired using Land Vehicle Tech and can be further upgraded, but it is not considered a "family" vehicle for the purposes of upgrading via Moto.

SHIMMERING SMOG

Someone caught in the yellow and green shimmering smog has a chance of being transported through space, time, or even into a subtly different alternate reality. If you decide to employ the smog, use the table below.

► SHIMMERING SMOG

1d6	Effect
1-2	Transported to a different part of the city.
3-5	Several hours pass in the blink of an eye.
6	One minor but noticeable detail about the victim's life has permanently changed. Only the victim notices.

AN URBAN LEGEND IS A FORM OF FOLKLORE. A STORY ABOUT AN FRIGHTENING, UNUSUAL, OR HUMOROUS EVENT THAT MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE TO BE TRUE BUT THAT IS NOT TRUE.

URBAN LEGENDS ARE OFTEN TOLD AS IF COMING FROM A "FRIEND OF A FRIEND," REMOVING PRIMARY SOURCES. IN THE MODERN DAY, THESE STORIES ARE FURTHER PROPAGATED BY MEDIA IN THE FORM OF ARTICLES, BOOKS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS AND VIDEOS.